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Experiences of Fire Survivors and Disaster Mental Health

Gerontology, Psychology

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The current study is interested in how age, social support, self-efficacy, and depression are related to resilience specifically in the case of the Colorado fire victims in 2012. These factors assume roles within the Life Course Model which makes it a useful tool in advancing our understanding of resilience in disaster victims and constructing a theoretical framework to guide further research. Considering the factors of age and social support, research suggests that social networking and family support are particularly important for older adults (Kamo et al., 2011). Extended families and neighbors are of specific importance because their social contribution is key in maintaining mental health of older victims (Shenk et al., 2009). The results for social support and level of resilience reported are mixed. However, the importance of social support for older individuals seems to be even more relevant considering the study by Gooding et al. (2012), which reports younger people actually had more resiliency related to social support than older adults. Further investigation on social support and impact on elders appears relevant. Depression appears to also be an important factor in resilience particularly if there is depression prior to a disaster (Ginexi et al., 2000). Depression is a factor related to overall levels of resilience following many types of life events (Taylor et al., 2011) and deserves consideration with survivors of fire. Overall, review of the current literature suggests that limited research exists in the area of disaster relief for fire victims. For quantitative data obtained from the survey a Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was used to build a predictive model of resilience using scores on the four instruments for self-efficacy, depression, social support and resilience. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions was analyzed using theme analysis in other words identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data.